

Message Text

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ORIGIN ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 COME-00 SAB-01 EB-11 INT-08 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04

RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20 USIE-00 INRE-00 SSO-00

NSCE-00 /103 R

DRAFTED BY ARA/PAN:RHECHTMAN:ZC

APPROVED BY ARA/PAN:PFMORRIS

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O 111516Z JAN 74

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY PANAMA IMMEDIATE

UNCLAS STATE 006135

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, PN

SUBJECT: CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR ARTICLE OF 11 JAN 74

THE FOLLOWING ARTICLE BY JAMES NELSON GOODSSELL TITLED "U.S. WILLING ON PANAMA CANAL PACT" APPEARS IN TODAY'S EASTERN EDITION OF THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR.

1. BEGIN QUOTE PANAMA AND THE UNITED STATES HAVE INITIALED A PRELIMINARY AGREEMENT CALLING FOR THE EVENTUAL END OF UNITED STATES CONTROL OF THE PANAMA CANAL.

2. WHILE OFFICIALS IN BOTH PANAMA CITY AND WASHINGTON EMPHASIZE THE "PRELIMINARY" NATURE OF THE ACCORD, IT AMOUNTS TO A FIRST STEP IN SOLVING PANAMA'S LONG AND BITTER DISPUTE WITH THE UNITED STATES OVER THE CANAL AND THE ZONE SURROUNDING IT.

3. THE AGREEMENT WAS WORKED OUT THIS WEEK ON CONTADORA ISLAND- A LOVELY TROPICAL RETREAT OFF THE PANAMANIAN COAST, BY VETERAN UNITED STATES DIPLOMAT ELLSWORTH BUNKER

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AND PANAMANIAN FOREIGN MINISTER JUAN ANTONIO TACK.

4. FULL DETAILS OF THE AGREEMENT HAVE YET TO BE RE-LEASED, BUT IT INCLUDES THE FOLLOWING POINTS:

- EVENTUAL PANAMANIAN JURISDICTION OVER THE CANAL AND THE ZONE - WITH THE TIMETABLE FOR THE TRANSFER TO BE WORKED OUT IN FUTURE NEGOTIATIONS.

- WASHINGTON'S FORMAL ACCEPTANCE OF THE IDEA THAT THE TREATY OF 1903, UNDER WHICH THE CANAL IS GIVEN TO THE UNITED STATES IN "PERPETUITY," IS OUT OF DATE.

- PROVISION FOR THE POSSIBLE CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW CANAL THROUGH PANAMA, OR THE ENLARGEMENT OF THE PRESENT WATERWAY, BUT IN EITHER CASE ONE THAT WOULD PERMIT CANAL USE BY THE LARGE SUPERTANKERS.

- CONTINUING UNITED STATES DEFENSE OF THE CANAL AS A VITAL LINK IN WORLD OCEAN TRAFFIC.

SUB HEADING ONLY A FIRST STEP

5. BOTH PANAMANIAN AND UNITED STATES SOURCES ARE QUICK TO POINT OUT THAT THE BUNKER-TACK AGREEMENT IS ONLY A FIRST STEP.

6. "THERE ARE COUNTLESS STUMBLING BLOCKS IN THE PATH OF ANY LASTING AND COMPLETE ACCORD ON CANAL ISSUES," A UNITED STATES SOURCE SAID. "BUT THE AGREEMENT IS CLEARLY THE MOST HOPEFUL PIECE OF NEWS WE HAVE HAD ON THIS QUESTION IN 10 YEARS.

7. IT WAS 10 YEARS AGO THAT THE PANAMANIAN DISPUTE WITH THE UNITED STATES OVER THE CANAL FLARED INTO MAJOR RIOTING IN PANAMA WHICH LEFT A SCORE DEAD, HUNDREDS WOUNDED, AND RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO NATIONS BROKEN. SINCE THEN, PANAMA HAS REGULARLY CALLED FOR THE TRANSFER OF THE CANAL, WITH LAST MARCH'S SPECIAL UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL SESSION THE LATEST FORUM FOR THE PANAMANIAN CASE.

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8. IN THE MONTHS SINCE THAT SESSION, THE TWO NATIONS AGREED QUIETLY TO NEW TALKS ON THE ISSUE - AND THEY WERE BEGUN IN NOVEMBER FOLLOWING MR. BUNKER'S APPOINTMENT AS SPECIAL AMBASSADOR. HE AND MR. TACK HAVE MET THREE TIMES.

SUB HEADING BOTH SIDES ANXIOUS

9. BOTH NATIONS NOW WANT TO MOVE SWIFTLY INTO TALKS ON

THE SUBSTANCE OF THE PRELIMINARY AGREEMENT.THEY ARE EXPECTED TO TACKLE FIRST THE CONTINUING DISAGREEMENT OVER THE TIMING OF THE TRANSFER OF CANAL CONTROL FROM THE

UNITED STATES TO PANAMA.

10. PANAMA IS CALLING FOR THE TRANSFER WITHIN THE NEXT DOZEN YEARS, OR BY 1985, WHILE THE UNITED STATES FAVORS A GRADUAL RELINQUISHMENT OF CONTROL OVER A PERIOD OF FROM 40 TO 50 YEARS.

11. OBVIOUSLY SOME SORT OF COMPROMISE WILL HAVE TO BE WORKED OUT.

SUB HEADING CONGRESS WARY

12. AN EVEN-MORE-SERIOUS PROBLEM COULD BE THE REACTION IN CONGRESS AND IN VARIOUS OFFICIAL AGENCIES IN WASHINGTON OVER THE WHOLE ISSUE OF A NEW CANAL TREATY. ADVERSE REACTION BY VARIOUS CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS, FOR EXAMPLE, COULD CAUSE DIFFICULTIES FOR MR. BUNKER.

13. MOREOVER, THE DEFENSE, COMMERCE, AND INTERIOR DEPARTMENTS WILL HAVE TO BE CONSULTED ON THE WHOLE AFFAIR - AND THERE IS SOME CONCERN IN BOTH PANAMANIAN AND UNITED STATES CIRCLES CLOSE TO THE NEGOTIATIONS THAT OBJECTIONS TO PANAMANIAN CONTROL BY DEFENSE DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS MAY BE AN EVEN BIGGER STUMBLING BLOCK.

14. MANY DEFENSE SPECIALISTS HOLD THAT THE CANAL IS VITAL TO UNITED STATES DEFENSE ARRANGEMENTS. SOME MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, INCLUDING DANIEL FLOOD OF PENNSYLVANIA, USE THIS ARGUMENT TO OPPOSE ANY CHANGE IN UNCLASSIFIED

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THE 1903 TREATY. END QUOTE
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 11 JAN 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974STATE006135
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: RHECHTMAN:ZC
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740147/aaaabser.tel
Line Count: 156
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ORIGIN ARA
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: elyme
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 22 FEB 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <22 FEB 2002 by elbezefj>; APPROVED <19-Nov-2002 by elyme>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR ARTICLE OF 11 JAN 74 THE FOLLOWING ARTICLE BY JAMES NELSON GOODSSELL TITLED "U.S.
TAGS: PFOR, PN
To: PANAMA
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005